

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04

SIL-01 IO-10 INT-05 AGR-05 SCCT-01 OPR-02 /090 W

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O R 201951Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 111

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2097

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, EAGR, PINT, HO

SUBJECT: SUDDEN WIDESPREAD CAMPESINO LAND INVASIONS

BEGIN SUMMARY: CAMPESINOS AFFILIATED TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC CAMPESINO ORGANIZATION, UNC, HAVE BEGUN A SERIES OF LAND INVASIONS THAT INVOLVE TEN OF THE COUNTRY'S EIGHTEEN DEPARTMENTS. THE CAMPESINOS CLAIM TO HAVE TAKEN THE ACTION BECAUSE OF THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN INSTITUTE'S (INA) FAILURE TO DELIVER LAND FOR PLANTING. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION AND IS MAINTAINING A WATCHFUL EYE ON DEVELOPMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. CAMPESINO LAND INVASIONS, DORMANT SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT IN DECEMBER, 1972, HAVE ONCE AGAIN EMERGED ON THE NATIONAL SCENE. ALTHOUGH THE EXACT NUMBERS ARE UNCERTAIN, PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT OVER 100 INVASIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN TEN OF THE COUNTRY'S EIGHTEEN DEPARTMENTS SINCE THEY BEGAN MAY 18. THE INVADING CAMPESINO
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GROUPS ARE AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL CAMPESINO UNION (UNC) WHICH BELONGS TO THE CGT, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LABOR CONFEDERATION BASED IN TEGUCIGALPA.

2. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED TO EXPLAIN THE MOVE BY THE UNC, THE ORGANIZATION'S PRESIDENT, PEDRO MENDOZA (A MEMBER OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY) SAID THAT THE MOVE WAS MADE NECESSARY BECAUSE THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN INSTITUTE (INA) WAS NOT ACTING QUICKLY ENOUGH TO PROVIDE LAND FOR CAMPESINOS TO PLANT. THIS RATIONALE WAS CONFIRMED BY JULIAN LAGOS, CGT PRESIDENT, IN A CONVERSATION WITH LABOFF MAY 20.

3. ACCORDING TO MENDOZA, THE UNC HAD NEGOTIATED AN AGREEMENT WITH INA DIRECTOR LT. COLONEL MARIO MALDONADO ON APRIL 28 BY WHICH THE LATTER PROMISED TO DELIVER LANDS BY MAY 10. MENDOZA CONTENDS THAT THE CAMPESINOS WERE FORCED TO ACT BECAUSE THE LAND WAS NOT TURNED OVER AND SINCE THE RAINS HAVE BEGUN, PLANTING MUST BEGIN.

4. THE UNC, AS A FIRST STEP, IS DEMANDING MALDONADO BE REPLACED BY SOMEONE SYMPATHETIC TO CAMPESION PROBLEMS. MANDOZA STATED THAT HE WANTED NO PROBLEM WITH THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT.

5. THE ANACH ASSEMBLY, COMPOSED OF 25 CAMPESINO LEADERS, IS MEETING IN SAN PEDRO SULA TODAY TO DEFINE THAT ORGANIZATION'S AGRARIAN POLICY. FESITRANH (NORTH COAST LABOR FEDERATION), ANACH (HONDURAS' LARGEST CAMPESINO ORGANIZATION AND THE FEDERATION'S AFFILIATED SUGAR AND BANANA WORKERS' UNIONS HAVE AGREED TO MAINTAIN A COMMON POLICY ON AGRARIAN REFORM. THE PRONOUNCEMENT DETAILING THAT POLICY IS EXPECTED TO BE PUBLISHED THIS WEEK.

6. ACCORDING TO EL TIEMPO OF MAY 20, NINETY ARMED MEMBERS OF THE OLANCHO CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION (AGAO) TOOK OVER THE JUTICALPA (OLANCHO) INA OFFICE THE MORNING OF MAY 19 AND HELD THE EMPLOYEES HOSTAGE. THIS ACTION WAS TEKEN BECAUSE OF INA'S FAILURE TO RESPOND TO THE CAMPESINO INVASIONS. THE CATTLEMEN LEFT THE OFFICE IN THE AFTERNOON, TAKING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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LOCAL INA REPRESENTATIVE WITH THEM TO SHOW HIM THE SCENE OF THE INVASIONS.

7. LT. COLONEL HUBERT BODDEN, ARMY G-2, TOLD MILGP COMMANDER MAY 20 THAT PRESS ACCOUNTS OF INVASIONS WERE EXAGGERATED BUT THAT THE MILITARY IS CONCERNED. THERE HAVE BEEN NO CLASHES BETWEEN TROOPS AND CAMPESINOS BUT THERE HAVE BEEN "INCIDENTS" BETWEEN CAMPESINOS AND LAND OWNERS. THE SITUATION IS MOST SERIOUS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF OLANCHO WHERE THERE ARE LONG STANDING DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN CAMPESINOS AND LAND OWNERS. BODDEN SAID THAT INA HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SITUATION BUT THAT THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS CLOSELY WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS. HE SAID THAT THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL IS IN SESYEON TODAY.

8. COMMENT: THE LARGE CAMPESINO INVASIONS REPRESENT A SERIOUS TEST FOR THE MELGAR GOVERNMENT. FERNANDO LARDIZABAL, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION (FENAGH) HAS SAID IN PRESS INTERVIEWS THAT THE CAMPESINOS ARE TRYING TO "INTIMIDATE" THE GOVERNMENT. WHATEVER THE TRUTH OF THAT STATEMENT, THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH HOPING THAT INA CAN MANAGE THE PROBLEM, REALIZES THAT IT IS BEING TESTED AND WILL LIKELY TAKE STRONG ACTION IF THE LAND INVASIONS CONTINUE. UNC HAS LONG BEEN THE MOST MILITANT OF THE CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS AND, IF THIS SERIES OF INVASIONS IS SUCCESSFUL, THE MORE MODERATE ANACH WILL FEEL PRESSURE TO CHANGE ITS GENERALLY MODERATE POSITION.

10. THE PLIGHT OF THE CAMPESINOS IS REAL. CAMPESINO LEADERS HAVE COMPLAINED TO EMBOFFS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS OF INA'S SLOWNESS. AND, IF CULTIVATION IS NOT BEGUN IN THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS, ANOTHER PLANTING SEASON WILL BE LOST. JULIAN LAGOS TOLD LABOFF THAT UNC HAD NEGOTIATION SESSION SCHEDULED WITH THE "GOVERNMENT" AFTERNOON OF MAY 20. INA DIRECTOR MALDONADO HAS SCHEDULED PRESS CONFERENCE FOR SAME AFTERNOON. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS WILL BE CABLED.
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